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FOREIGN NATIONALITY GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES
MEMORANDUM TO THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
FROM THE FOREIGN NATIONALITIES BRANCH

Number B-231

31 July 1944

THE TASHNAGS TURN TO SOVIET RUSSIA

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: SEP 2007

At its annual convention 1 July the nationalistic Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnags) officially approved the long-bruited reversal of its traditional anti-Sovietism. All Tashnag references to the USSR from now on are to be friendly. A campaign to enlist public support for Russian annexation of Turkish Armenia, for which \$100,000 has already been raised, is to begin. The Tashnag *volte face* has failed to elicit the slightest response from Soviet officialdom and has been greeted by liberal Armenian-Americans with derisive charges of insincerity, leaving the nationalists feeling more isolated than ever.

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THE ONCE uncompromisingly anti-Soviet Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) has officially changed its spots, and the swing toward support of the Soviet Union, which has been growing gradually more perceptible during the last few months,* has culminated in the adoption of a pro-Soviet policy at the Federation's annual convention, held in Boston the first week in July. This final reversal is branded as hypocrisy by anti-Tashnag Armenian-Americans, who regard the move as the

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* An earlier hint of the Tashnag *volte face* was given at the time of the USSR's constitutional grant of autonomy to its 16 constituent republics. See "Foreign Nationalities Assess the Soviet Autonomy Move," FN Number 181 of 7 April 1944.

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latest in a long series of maneuvers designed to mislead the public as to Tashnag's true intentions. ✓

The Tashnags have never actually renounced their dream of a free and independent Armenia, including the Turkish Irredenta, which has kept them at loggerheads with the USSR ever since Armenia was established as a Soviet component in 1920. But the apparent impracticability of their hopes and their feeling of isolation from all other Armenian groups probably combined with Russian military successes to bring about this decision to make the best of the existing situation.

With the vision of independence fading, the now Soviet-friendly Tashnags are turning their attention to the acquisition of the Turkish provinces of Armenia by the Soviet Armenian Republic. The call for Russian annexation of Turkish Armenia was raised by the ARF some months ago, and was accompanied by a campaign to raise a \$100,000 propaganda fund for that purpose, now said to be oversubscribed. Only gradually, however, did criticism of the Soviet Union in the Armenian-American Tashnag press abate. Now the Tashnag leaders are preparing to bring Armenian problems before the public eye, and an essential element, they believe, is mollification of the Soviets.

The decisions of the Tashnag convention's closed sessions were communicated to a member of this Branch by James Mandalian, editor of the weekly *Entrenik* and spokesman for Simon Vratzian, executive secretary of the ARF and prime minister of the independent Armenian Republic of 1918-20. Vratzian had outlined to the Boston gathering his proposals for a pro-Soviet policy; the 80-odd delegates were at first undecided, but after "eloquent and impressive argument" by the speaker they had come around at last to enthusiastic approval. The policy, according to Mr. Mandalian, is "to use honey

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for catching flies rather than vinegar." All Tashnag references to the USSR from now on are to be complimentary. The familiar caustic, skeptical or cynical barbs heretofore hooked into all references to the Soviets are to be put aside. "The Russians are extremely sensitive people, and they watch everything," Mandalian added.

At present the ARF feels itself to be wholly isolated, according to Mandalian. The only response from Ambassador Gromyko to an appeal for Soviet-Armenian and USSR press releases has been the forwarding of the Embassy Bulletin. Previous communications to Moscow and Erivan remain unanswered. This awkward situation, it is hoped, will be corrected when Moscow recognizes the new policy of friendliness. "The Russians need plenty of publicity, and we're the biggest Armenian publishers in the world."

*Skepticism of
the Liberals*

A spokesman for the traditionally anti-Tashnag Armenian Democratic Liberal Union (Rangavar) was skeptical of the sincerity of the Tashnag conversion. In his opinion, pressure from the Tashnag membership had forced the leaders to put on a pro-Soviet mask; it remains however only a mask, and when convenient it can be taken off. Tashnag fund-raising and propaganda schemes were described as elaborate money-making rackets for the insiders, which did nothing for the war effort or for Armenian relief.

Undeterred by the criticism of the anti-Tashnags and their refusal to cooperate in the propaganda campaign, the ARF is proceeding with its plans, and hopes to enlist the support of some unaffiliated Armenians of prominence as well as a few friendly Americans. If, as the Tashnags believe and hope, Turkey remains neutral, she will be in a highly vulnerable position, and one

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item of payment for her neutrality, according to Mr. Mandalian, would be the cession of Turkish Armenia to Soviet Armenia. Perhaps another item, he added, would be the letting of considerable Turkish blood; after all, the Armenians "would rather kill Turks than live."

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